(SIU) of Ministry of Finance had initially identified 354 posts as surplus in Tea Board, and recommended abolition of 235 posts and to redeploy or allow normal waste out of the balance 119 posts. SIU had further clarified that on reconsideration the revised number of posts found surplus is 355, the number of posts for abolition is 237 and 118 posts were for redeployment.

(b) Based on the original report, Tea Board has agreed to abolish 224 posts as 11 posts were filled up by promotion of eligible employees which would be treated as posts meant for redeployment. Of 119 posts meant for redeployment, Tea Board has requested the Department of Commerce for retention of 44 posts.

(c) The matter is under examination.

Export of Minerals

2999. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that large scale export of minerals is being allowed without heading the long-term requirement of metallurgical industries within the country;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the necessity of export of minerals in the context of depleted foreign exchange reserves more than a decade ago is no longer there; and

(c) in the above context and the fact that a large number of MoUs by steel producers seek to treble the capacity in the country, will the Government stop or phase out the export of minerals particularly iron ore immediately?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN) (a) The export of major minerals, namely, iron ore, chrome ore and manganese ore is not unbridled. The export of iron ore with iron content up to 64% is free and iron ore with iron content more than 64% is restricted through designated State Trading Enterprise, namely, MMTC Limited. Likewise, there are quantitative and qualitative restrictions on export of chrome ore and manganese ore.

(b) The export of iron ore is necessitated due to the ore being in surplus quantity after meeting the demand of domestic industry; to avoid environmental hazards resulting from accumulated surplus iron ore; and to promote mining activity generating more employment. Likewise, only surplus chrome ore and manganese ore are allowed to be exported with quantitative cap after ascertaining the requirements of the domestic industry.

(c) The iron ore resources are available for exports even after meeting the demand of domestic industry. Hence, there is no such proposal under consideration at present.

Provision for data protection

3000. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is under pressure from MNCs to provide for data protection; and

(b) if so, what are the details and views of various Government Departments for the grant of data protection?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN) (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

India a Knowledge hub

3001. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) how Government proposes to give concrete shape to the statement made by the Commerce Minister that" by 2035 India's population is to stablise at about 1.5 billion, the country would achieve 100 per cent literacy and that it would become a knowledge hub, serving future workers through a convergence of technologies".

(b) what are the broad strategies being thought of, with a time-frame in this regard;and